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THE MASTERSHIP AND ITS FRUITS:

THE EMANCIPATED SLAVE

Face to Face with his Old Master.

A SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT TO

HON. EDWIN M. STANTON, SECRETARY OF WAR,

BY JAMES McKAYE, SPECIAL COMMISSIONER.

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THE EMANCIPATED SLAVE,

FACE TO FACE

WITH HIS OLD MASTER.

(Valley of the Lower Mississippi.)

To the Hon. EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War:

Of all portions of the slave region to which the Commission have had access, the valley of the lower Mississippi affords the most interesting field for the observation and study of the slave system, as well as of the great changes which, at the present moment, slave society is everywhere undergoing. Unlike most other sections visited by the Commission, here are found all the elements of that society still in existence; but in a state of revolution and transformation. Here, facing the broad river on either side, still stands the great white mansion of the planter; by its side, just without its shadow, the long rows of cabins called the negro quarters, and, a little in the rear, the great quadrangular structure, usually of brick, known as the sugar-house. In many instances the old master still occupies the mansion, and the negroes their old quarters; but under circumstances and in relations quite new, strange, and full of anxiety to both.

During a recent visit to the neighborhood of these mansions and negro quarters, many important facts came to light, and many important suggestions occurred, not elsewhere presented.

In most other sections visited by the Commission, slave society had been observed in a state of total disruption. Either

the master or the slave, or both, had become fugitives. In South Carolina, the masters had absconded, leaving their habitations and their slaves. In Virginia and North Carolina, as well as in many localities in the southwest held by our armies, the emancipated could only be seen as fugitives, and the old masters not at all. On the contrary in such portions of the valley of the Lower Mississippi as are within our military lines, and especially in the river region of Louisiana, many of them still stand face to face in the presence of the great revolution, and of the trials to which it summons both.

Before entering further into the considerations especially suggested by the state of things here presented, it is important to advert to some of the peculiar features of the slave system, as it existed in this part of the country.

In the first place, the origin and character of the first settlers of Louisiana and the Lower Mississippi had an important bearing in modifying many of its features. These settlers were for the most part, of French, Spanish, and Portuguese origin, or of what has been called the Latin Race, and it is said that the people of this race do by no means entertain the same rooted antipathies, and low consideration of the black race, as are generally ascribed to the races with a shade whiter skin.

However this may be, it is undoubtedly true that there is found here a much more general admixture of the black and white races than prevails elsewhere, even in the slave-breeding States. And all the evidence goes to show that there existed in this region, especially in the earlier days of its settlement, a much greater social equality between the two races. No such utter repudiation of the manhood of the negro race, existed here as constituted the basis of the slave system in the islands and coasts of South Carolina and Georgia. Hence, although the amount of labor imposed upon the slave was often greater, and the system of punishments as cruel, yet their ordinary and habitual condition was better, and their daily life on a higher scale. They were not so rigorously forbidden the use of a family name. Their habitations were much more like those of other human beings. Usually their cabins contained not less than

two rooms, and often four. They were furnished with some sort of beds and bedding, and in their lodging those who considered themselves man and wife were separated from the single; the young, also, of different sexes slept in separate apartments; they did not usually eat at a family table, but they had dealt out to them, generally sufficiently cooked rations, which they might eat as they chose—the cooking being done for the whole force by regular details. On the other hand, "the hours of labor on the sugar plantations were from fifteen to eighteen per day, and at certain seasons of the year a greater part of the night was also occupied with labor. The hour of beginning work in the morning was from 3 to 4 o'clock. The overseer was expected to produce a certain crop with a given number of hands, and all were obliged to obey him in preference to the master. He was generally much more cruel than the master. Kind-hearted masters sometimes select cruel overseers."

I quote above from the testimony of Mr. J. B. Roudanez, a free mulatto creole of New Orleans, a man of great intelligence and probity, who had been employed as an engineer and mechanic upon many of the sugar plantations in the region of country under consideration. No man could have had a more thorough acquaintance with plantation life than he, and no man in the city of his residence bears a higher reputation for truth and sobriety.

He says, further, "that upon some plantations the women were worked as hard as the men, and in some instances were kept at labor in every stage of pregnancy, even up to the moment of delivery. Sometimes they were sent into the field one week after confinement; but ordinarily they were given one month in which to recover. Mothers were usually permitted to nurse their children for a half hour three times a day for the space of three months."

Another witness, Dr. E. C. Hyde, an old physician who had lived and practiced more than thirty years among the planters of North and South Carolina and in the Valley of the Mississippi, upon his examination declared, "that the slave women were forced to labor from pregnancy to maternity. I have known of births between the cotton rows; they were compelled to hoe out their row, and then given an hour to recover."

"Many planters on the Mississippi do not wish to raise negro children; they would rather they would die than live—they do not think it profitable."

"As to chastity," says Mr. Roudanez, "no such thing was known on the plantations. In the first place, the overseers had the run of all the field women, and if one of them refused, an occasion was very soon found for subjecting her to a severe punishment." "I have known," says another reliable witness, "women to be severely whipped for not coming to the quarters of the overseer or master for the purposes of prostitution, when ordered so to do." "The old masters usually made their selections from the house servants and the young masters generally preferred for their concubines their half-sisters. It was the common custom. They were usually taken at the age of thirteen or fourteen. I have known girls to be mothers at that age. This was especially true of French creoles." "Their own offspring," says Dr. Hyde, "were treated as slaves; they were frequently subjected to ferocious treatment, and sold, to put them out of their sight." "The practice of indiscriminate sexual intercourse," continues Mr. Roudanez, "was so universal that a chaste colored girl at the age of seventeen was almost unknown." "The planters' habit of cohabitation with their slave women was a source of great suffering to these women. Frequently the jealous wife would procure them to be whipped or otherwise punished upon false charges, and often when their husbands were absent had them punished in their own presence." The tortures sometimes inflicted upon these helpless favorites of the husband by the infuriated wife, in order to render them less attractive to the husband, are not to be described. "The fact of the promiscuous cohabitation was well known to both parents and children."

Nor were the puishments less severe here than in other portions of the slave region. Whipping with the paddle, scourging with the whip of twisted bull's hide or knotted cords: torturing with the heavy iron-horned collar and with heavy iron rings with chain attached, worn upon the ankle for months; confinement in the stocks in the dark cells of the plantation prisons, often without food, and hunting with blood-hounds, were all practiced here as well as elsewhere. "Some whites," says Mr. Roudanez,

"made hunting slaves with blood-hounds a regular profession."

And yet, notwithstanding all this, there did exist among these people a kind of human life, full, it is true, of the most unheard-of toil, and of the most dreadful suffering, and yet, in degradation, it did not approach by many degrees, the slave life upon the shores of South Carolina.

Besides the circumstances already referred to, there were others peculiar to this section of country, which had their influence upon the working of the slave-system, as well as on the character of the slave population. The sugar culture, which, as we have seen, at certain seasons of the year, exacted the most formidable labors, required also, for its successful prosecution, a certain degree of judgment and skill in those employed in it. A portion of the people on every sugar plantation had to be mechanics and artizans. This had its effect in the development of a higher general intelligence upon these plantations. "Generally," says Mr. Roudanez, "upon every plantation there was at least one man who had somehow learned to read a little, and in secret used to read to the others, notwithstanding the severe punishment always inflicted, upon the detection of such offences." "On the day following that on which the news of the execution of John Brown reached New Orleans, I started for a plantation seventy-five miles up the river. Soon after my arrival there, a slave gave me a detailed account of the execution. That morning a slave in the sugar-house had asked of his master a piece of paper to wipe some portion of the machinery. He handed him a newspaper, the greater part of which he retained, and afterwards secretly read it to the whole force. It contained an account of John Brown's execution."

Another fact had its effect. The sugar plantations of the Valley of the Mississippi for the most part front upon the river, or upon some bayou, navigable at least for flat-boats, and in the rear abut upon interminable cypress swamps. These swamps became places of refuge for the slave pushed to the last extremity, very difficult of access even to the master of the blood-hounds. Many instances are known of slaves having lived for years in the recesses of these swamps, thickly wooded as they are with great cypress and cotton-wood trees, from whose branches hang suspended the long

gray moss, covering them as with a veil. These, thickly interspersed with an undergrowth of brambles, constitute an almost impenetrable jungle. Sometimes they lived alone, and sometimes in bands of a greater or less number, often amounting to thirty, or even fifty persons, building for themselves, upon some little island of firmer ground, a lodging-place, and communicating in the night, by secret paths, with their fellows on the plantations. They subsisted by carrying off the pigs, turkeys, and chickens, and sometimes they "roped" into their hiding-places the sheep, or other cattle of the masters, butchered them, and exchanged portions of the meat with their friends on the plantation for corn-meal. Their great enemies in these swamps were the mosquitoes. In the night no living creature can stand their bite. Cattle left exposed are often killed by them. Every night they were obliged to keep up a smouldering fire of cypress branches, the smoke of which was their only defence against these hateful insects.

Many marvellous incidents and instances of heroism are related of these Mississippi Maroons. Mr. Alfred Jervis, of New Orleans, one of the Executive Committee of the "Free State Association," knew a man who had lived for three years in the top of a large cypress tree, although often hunted by the hounds. Mr. Jervis also related an instance of a less successful refugee, who, for an attempt to escape, had his back flayed by the blows of the twisted whip of dried bull's hide, and was then tied with his face to a tree, and left all night to be devoured by the mosquitoes. In the morning some of his fellow-slaves found him, covered with the gorged insects, quite dead.

Octave Johnson, now a corporal in Company C, 15th Regiment of the *Corps d'Afrique*, as related by himself to a member of the Commission, had lived with his band of thirty, (ten women and twenty men), eighteen months in the swamps of St. James' Parish. His master, S. Coutrell, at present himself a refugee in the quagmires of secession, had purchased him at a great price, and had taken him to his plantation to make sugar hogsheads; for Octave was a cooper. At the early dawn one morning, Octave was found asleep at his bench. His allotted task required him to be early at work. He had risen in the first hours of the morning, and, repairing to his place of toil,

seated himself upon his bench to wait for sufficient light to begin his labor. "I suppose," said he, "that I must have fallen asleep; for the first I knew I found myself lying on the ground, sort of stunned, Massa standing over me with a big stick in his hand." Two stout slaves were ordered to take Octave to the whipping place, and give him fifty lashes.

It should be understood that whipping, throughout all the slave region, was by no means what is known by that name elsewhere—not at all the same thing as that sometimes applied at the North to refractory school-boys. In these slave communities it had been reduced to a species of recognized art. Its implements were among the most prominent signs of slave civilization, as Carlisle says the gallows was, formerly, in England. In the first place, the whips were of various kinds, according to the exact effect intended to be produced. There was the whip of knotted hempen cords; the whip with the twisted lash of dried bull's hide; the coach-trace whip, and the paddle. "Sometimes," says Dr. Hyde, "flat hand-saws were used as whips." Then there were various exposures and postures. Sometimes the victim, stripped stark naked from the armpits to the heels, was laid, face downwards, over a stout beam, supported upon posts at the proper elevation, with the feet and hands fastened with strong ropes to stakes driven firmly into the ground on either side. In that posture one or the other of the above mentioned instruments was applied, according to the ultimate intention of the master. If he contemplated a future sale of the slave, the paddle was generally used. This consisted of a broad piece of heavy sole-leather, some fourteen or sixteen inches in length, nailed to a convenient wooden handle. This only bruised the flesh, without breaking the skin, and after some weeks or months all signs of its use disappeared, and no suspicion was aroused in any future purchaser, of the indocility of the chattel. On the other hand, the use of all the other instruments lacerated the flesh to a considerable depth, and left forever after enormous ridges or welts. Often two were employed to do the prescribed work, the first becoming too much fatigued to make his blows heavy enough to satisfy the critical eye of the on-looking master or overseer, was relieved by a fresh hand, until the required number of blows had been all told; and then,

the arms being loosed, a pail of old beef or pork brine was dashed upon the back. If the victim had fainted, this usually roused him, and staunched the flowing blood. He was then set at liberty, and allowed to begin his daily task in the cane or cotton-field.

The operation was frequently varied by a change of posture. Sometimes the victims were stripped as before mentioned and bound to a tree or post. Sometimes, especially women in the last stages of child-bearing, were laid naked upon the ground, face downward, with their arms and legs stretched out and firmly bound to stakes, "a hole," says the witness, "being dug underneath large enough to admit the pregnant belly," and then the knotted or the twisted scourge, the coach trace or the paddle, was applied as before mentioned. "In some parishes," says Mr. Jervis, "they have hired whippers."

Of this nature were the incentives to life-long human toil, furnished by a system that Bishop Hopkins and Prof. S. F. B. Morse declare to be of Divine ordination. We read with especial wonder in the ancient Scriptures of a tribe of men who believed in the divinity of the god Moloch. We shudder at the ordeal to which his worship subjected his votaries. That worship was doubtless the creation of a depraved and perverted human intellect. Upon that primal age, however, the Sun of Righteousness had not yet arisen. But this is the middle of the nineteenth Christian century. What is to be said of the devotees of a divinity still more monstrous and cruel than the ancient god of the Ammonites?

Let it be borne in mind that what I have here been describing was the ordinary mode of punishment, *only whipping*, and by no means anything unusual or extraordinary. Nor was the spectacle witnessed alone by the old master and his overseer, but frequently by the young masters and mistresses also, as in the case of the South Carolina planter, referred to in the main report of the Commission.

But, to return to Octave. He said: "I had never been whipped, but I had heard the blows and the groans of the others, and I made up my mind quickly to run for the swamp which lay a mile or so in the rear of the sugar-house." Being a fleet runner, Octave outstripped his pursuers, reached the swamp, and

plunged into its jungles. After some days he found the band of refugees with whom he afterwards lived. Of course his master did not mean to lose so valuable a chattel. Accordingly he sent for a famous professional slave-hunter, Eugène Jardeau by name, and hired him with his pack of twenty hounds to recover the fugitive, dead or alive.

His friends on the plantation having given him and his companions timely notice, the band immediately set about preparing for the struggle. Two or three of them took the women, and by making a long "détour" secreted them in a place of safety, returning upon their own tracks to the path that led to their former hiding place, having (carefully rubbed the soles of their feet with the feet of rabbits, with which they had previously supplied themselves for this purpose, and dragging these after them to deceive the scent of the hounds,) with clubs in their hands they waited at the point of junction for the attack. All day they stood together and fought the hounds, slowly retreating farther and farther into the swamp. They succeeded in killing eight of them. Towards sun-down, becoming thoroughly exhausted, with their arms and legs torn by the fangs of the dogs, and having lost much blood, the word was given to scatter and run. "*Sauve qui peut.*" Octave and four or five of his companions made for a bayou in the rear. Under the headway of men fleeing for life, they reached the bank to discover that its shallow waters, obstructed by great roots and fallen trees, were full of alligators. They could not stop if they would—they made the leap and scrambled through. The hounds followed, and the alligators, not touching the negroes, attacked the dogs with great fury, killing six of them.

Mr. Jardeau coming up, and seeing how matters stood, hastily recalled what was left of his pack. Octave and his companions escaped. Not one was killed or taken. He was asked how he explained the fact that the alligators did not even attempt to attack him and his companions, but fell upon the hounds with such voracity. He answered: "D'un no, Massa. Some ob 'em said dey tought t'was God; but, for my part, I tink de alligators loved dog's flesh better'n *personal flesh.*"

Some few months after this battle with the blood-hounds in

the swamps of St. James' Parish, another battle occurred, which resulted in Gen. Butler's taking possession of New Orleans, and it became Mr. Coutrell's turn to flee. Octave and his companions, being duly advised by their friends, left the swamp, made their way to Camp Parapet, then in command of Gen. Phelps, and gave themselves up. Most of the men enlisted in the army.

Incidents of the kind above mentioned were not infrequent. The swamps were never free of negroes. They constituted a species of asylum, and that fact had its effect upon the character of the negro, and upon the working of the system. As a general thing, the negro became more self-reliant, and the master more wary, often adopting very inhuman measures of precaution, such as branding with a hot iron, splitting or cropping the ears, and compelling the suspected to wear the heavy iron collar with horns, called "a choker."

Another fact that had an important influence upon the system in the region under consideration, as well as on the character of the slave, remains to be mentioned. The valley of the Lower Mississippi, from an early period of its settlement, contained a proportionately large free colored population. In 1803, when the territory of which the State of Louisiana forms a part was ceded by the French Republic to the United States, these free colored men were already quite numerous, and many of them were possessed of considerable property. They were not only as free as any other portion of the population, but in general as well educated and intelligent. Many of them were the children of the early white settlers, and had always enjoyed a certain social as well as civil equality. As to the enjoyment of political rights, under the old Spanish and French regimes, neither white or black settlers ever had much experience; consequently, there had never arisen among them much question of these rights, or as to whom they belonged. The French Republic, founded upon "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," had not yet quite forgotten the import of these words, and hence caused to to be inserted in the treaty of cession a solemn stipulation, in the words following, to wit:

ART. 3d. "The inhabitants of the ceded territory shall be incorporated into the union of the United States, and admitted as soon as possible, according to the principles of the Federal Constitution, to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States; and in the mean time they shall be maintained and protected in the *free* enjoyment of their liberty, property, and the religion which they profess."

Under this article of the treaty of 1803, the free colored people of Louisiana have always held, and do now claim, that the government of the United States was solemnly bound to secure to them "all the rights, advantages, and immunities" that were justly due to any other free inhabitants of the ceded territory, whatever might be the political forms which it was subsequently permitted to assume; and that, therefore, in authorizing the white inhabitants of the territory to organize it into slave States under such constitutions and laws as excluded them from all political and many civil rights and immunities, the government of the United States permitted the perpetration of a great wrong, not only against them, but against the good faith and the honor of the whole people of the United States.

It is difficult to see how the case they present, even upon the letter of the treaty, can be successfully traversed. And it is still more difficult to understand how the fact of their having lain under a great wrong for sixty years can now be set up as a reason for refusing to rectify it. Besides, to-day it cannot be denied that the free colored people of Louisiana are, as a body, as well educated, as intelligent, as orderly, and as industrious as any other equal portion of the common population of the State; on an average, as rich as the mass of the people of the Free States,* and certainly far more loyal than their white fellow-citi-

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* There is some difficulty in getting at the exact number of the free colored population of Louisiana, or at the exact assessed value of the property on which they paid taxes in any given year. According to the United States census of 1860, the free colored population of the State was at that period 18,647, and, from the best information I could obtain at New Orleans, the as-

zens, as was proved in the summer of last year, when Governor Shepley made a call for volunteers to defend the city of New Orleans against a threatened attack of the rebel army under Magruder; while the white inhabitants, even many of those that had been in the employ of the Government, held back and refused to be enrolled, in forty-eight hours after the call addressed to the free colored people was issued, more than one hundred of their shops and places of business were closed and a full regiment was organized and ready for the field, and within seventy-two hours a second. Are not these people, then, as fit in all respects to enjoy and exercise the rights civil and political of citizenship, as they whose only qualification is a shade whiter skin, and a reluctant swearing to an oath of allegiance under protest, or with mental reservation?

The truth is that the case of these old freemen of Louisiana is "*sui generis*," and does by no means involve the question connected with the justice or expediency of granting political rights to the recently emancipated colored people. Their claim to

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sessed value of the property on which they paid taxes for that year was about $13,000,000. This gives an average of about $700 for each person.

But the population, as given in the census for 1860, is believed to be considerably below the true estimate. The best informed persons, old residents of New Orleans, and familiar with the subject, putting it at not less than 25,000 at the present time. If we assume the assessed value of their property to be now what it was in 1860, it makes an average for each person of $520.

It is true that, according to the State census of 1853, as stated in the Louisiana State Register, the free colored population in that year was 28,820. But this is believed not to be accurate, inasmuch as, according to the same State Register, the population for the year 1850 was but 17,462.

These discrepancies arise in a great measure, undoubtedly, from the difficulty of distinguishing between the lightest shade of the colored population and the darkest shade of the white, and the consequent latitude of classification, according to the caprice of the persons making the census. It is believed, however, that the estimate of from 23,000 to 25,000 for the population, and from 13,000,000 to 15,000,000 as the assessed value of the property upon which they have paid taxes, approximates the truth.

In the loyal free States, according to the United States census for 1860, the estimate is as follows, viz:

Population, 19,239,851; valuation of real and personal property, $9,325,945,381; giving $484 to each person.—*See Nat. Almanac, pp.* 147 *and* 309.

the enjoyment of these rights rests upon entirely distinct and very different grounds. Besides, the Government needs the suffrages of these people in defence of the Constitution and the Union at this very hour, almost as indispensably as it needed their arms at the period above referred to.

But, however this may be, it is not difficult to understand how so numerous and intelligent a body of people, living and thriving in the midst of slavery in spite of all obstructions, of the same race as the enslaved, should have had an important influence as well upon the master as upon the slave, inducing the latter to greater and greater longing for liberty, and for the opportunity to live and labor, free from the scourge of the driver's whip; and the former to more and more wariness and severity of repression.

There were other peculiar circumstances connected with the working of the slave system in the Valley of the Lower Mississippi, to which I need not now refer. The facts here mentioned are sufficient to show that, in its main features, slavery was here of the same general nature as elsewhere. Its results and human products, are what we have principally to deal with, and these also are everywhere nearly identical. Thoroughly to comprehend these, and to know how to dispose of them, is the great necessity that presses upon our statesmen and rulers in the present hour.

As I have before said, here, upon the banks of the great river, these results and products are still to be seen, side by side, the colored man, as slavery has left him, and the white man, as slavery has made him.

Allow me briefly to present them, not in the light of my own personal observation alone, but rather in that of the experience of those whose duty it has been to mingle with them, and to deal practically with many of the troublesome and disturbing questions arising out of the great transformation going on in their midst.

And, first, as to the colored man. Gen. Banks, in command of the Department of the Gulf, whose experience and earnest study of the subject matter under consideration, gives weight to his testimony, declared to me that he had learned far more of the colored men than of the white; that they understood much

better the requirements of their own peculiar position in the present exigency than the white men did of theirs, and accepted them much more readily and wisely; and that, in his judgment, "whoever else might fail in the great revolution, it would not be the black man."

And, in a letter from Alexandria, Louisiana, in answer to certain inquiries addressed to him, previous to my departure from New Orleans, under date of March 28th, 1864, Gen. Banks writes:

"I entertain no doubt whatever of the capabilities of the emancipated colored people to meet and discharge the duties incident to the great change in their condition. I have seen them in all situations, within the last year and a half, and it is with much pleasure I say, as I stated to you in person, that they seem to me to have a clearer comprehension of their position, and the duties which rest upon them, than any other class of our people, accepting the necessity of labor which rests upon them as upon others. The conditions they uniformly impose show the good sense with which they approach the change in their condition.

"They demand, in the first instance, that to whatever punishment they may be subjected, they shall not be flogged.

"2d. That they shall labor only when they are well treated.

"3d. That families should not be separated.

"4th. That their children shall be educated.

"With these stipulations I have never found any person of that race who did not readily accept the necessity of continuous and faithful labor at just rates of compensation, which they seem willing to leave to the Government. As far as the experiment goes in this department, they have justified in the fullest degree this conclusion, and, subject to the conditions which they impose, they are willing to and have rendered faithful labor.

"There were in this department, when I assumed command, many thousands of colored persons without employment or home, who were decimated by disease and death of the most frightful character. To these, natives of the plantations in the department, have been added many thousand fugitives from the surrounding States, of every age and condition. There are not,

at this time, 500 persons that are not self-supporting, and there has not been in the last year, any day when we would not have gladly accepted ten or twenty thousand, irrespective of their condition, in addition to those we have of our own. Except that the negro understood the necessities of his position, and was able, in the language of your letter, "to meet and discharge the duties incident to the great change in his condition," this result would have been physically impossible.

"Wherever, in the department, they have been well treated, and reasonably compensated, they have invariably rendered faithful service to their employers.

"From many persons who manage plantations, I have received the information that there is no difficulty whatever in keeping them at work, if the conditions to which I have above referred are complied with."

And George H. Hanks, Colonel of the 15th Regiment, Corps d'Afrique, member of the Board of Enrollment, and Superintendent of negro labor in the Department of the Gulf, under date of February 6th, 1864, deposes: "that he went to Louisiana as a Lieutenant in the 12th Connecticut Regiment, under Gen. Butler; that he was appointed superintendent of contrabands under Brig. Gen. T. W. Sherman. The negroes, he says, t" came in scarred, wounded, and some with iron collars round heir necks. I set them at work on abandoned plan tations, and on the fortifications. At one time we had 6,500 of them; there was not the slightest difficulty with them. They are more willing to work, and more patient than any set of human beings I ever saw. It is true there is a general dislike to return to their old masters; and those who have remained at home are suspicious of foul play, and feel it to be necessary to run away to test their freedom. This year the dislike has very much lessened; they begin to feel themselves more secure, and do not hesitate to return for wages. The negroes *willingly accept the condition of labor for their own maintenance, and the musket for their freedom.* I knew a family of five, who were freed by the voluntary enlistment of one of the boys. He entered the ranks for the avowed purpose of freeing his family. His name was Moore; he was owned by the Messrs. Leeds, iron-founders; they

resided within one of the Parishes excepted in the Proclamation of Emancipation. He was the first man to fall at Pascagoula. Upon starting, he said to his family: "I know I shall fall, but you will be free."

"A negro soldier demanded his children at my hands. I wanted to test his affection. I said: 'they had a good home.' He said: 'Lieut., I want to send my children to school; my wife is not allowed to see them; I am in your service; I wear military clothes; I have been in three battles; I was in the assault at Port Hudson; I want my children; they are my flesh and blood.'"

Col. Hanks, whose true-hearted and faithful service to the colored people in the Department of the Gulf, cannot be too highly appreciated, did not, of course, undertake to withstand that appeal. The children were delivered to the father.

Next to the right to work for his own maintenance and that of his family, the colored man here, as elsewhere, asks for the privilege of sending his children to school.

"The colored people," says Col. Hanks, "manifest the greatest anxiety to educate their children, and they thoroughly appreciate the benefits of education. I have known a family to go with two meals a day, in order to save fifty cents a week to pay an indifferent teacher for their children."

The universal and urgent desire of the colored people for education was most strikingly illustrated by a fact that came to my knowledge during a recent visit to Port Hudson. In each of the camps of the colored regiments, the best built cabin was a school-house. These regiments had obtained the authorization of Gen. Andrews for the establishment of regimental schools. They proceeded with their own hands to erect school-houses, and, at their own cost, to procure teachers (in some of the regiments the chaplains undertook that duty); and, according to the testimony of their officers, all their leisure time was most assiduously and perseveringly devoted to their studies. Ought not the Government to encourage this most praiseworthy desire of the colored regiments, by providing for each, at least one permanent teacher? A disabled veteran white soldier, might be thus employed.

A desire for education, a love of knowledge in any community

or people have been always considered the surest proofs of their intrinsic worth, the most hopeful signs of their capacity for civilization and future advancement. The extraordinary manifestation of this love and desire among the emancipated colored people, when taken in connection with their previous condition of degradation, is one of the most amazing facts with respect to them. And when contrasted with the almost universal indifference, even contempt, with which the poor Southern whites regard that matter, is well calculated to stagger the white man's boast of the great superiority of his race. The colored man came out of Africa without a single element of civilization. Not even a tradition of any trace of education belongs to his ancestry. On the other hand, what are called "*the poor white trash*" of the Slave States, are for the most part, the descendants of the same race as the men who have carried our civilization from the hills of New England through the great wilderness, to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. They set out upon their career with many advantages of climate and soil, and with equal opportunities for education and enlightenment. But there stood in their way the formidable barriers of the *mastership*. Its all devouring darkness swallowed them up, and to-day it can only be said of them, that no more ignorant, demoralized, and pitiable community of human beings ever lived in any civilized country, in any age.

It may therefore be questioned, whether after all, the most pernicious and fatal work of the masters has not been wrought against their own race, even leaving out of the account their present attempt to overthrow the grandest results of its history—the nationality, civilization, and free institutions of the People of the United States.

"Besides their hearty appreciation of education, the colored people," says Col. Hanks, "are very religious and devotional, and through this channel are easily controlled and taught. I have had frequent exhibitions of their trust in God relative to their freedom. I have known them to pray to God to bless the d—d Yankees."

"The negroes," says Mr. Roudanez, "are much more virtuous since the Proclamation of Freedom. The men respect themselves much more, and the women are much more chaste, because

an honest livelihood is open to them. Cohabitation was often prompted by their wants, such as clothing and other necessaries."

It is hardly necessary for me to speak of the character of the colored man as a soldier, as presented here in the Valley of the Mississippi. The universal official attestation to his soldierly bearing and true valor under the severest trials, has put that beyond question. Nor are his sobriety, orderliness, and willing submission to discipline, less conspicuous. Gen. Andrews, in command at Port Hudson, recently assured me that his colored troops were his best troops, that they performed all their duties, and especially fatigue duties, with greater cheerfulness and more faithfully than the white regiments; and that, with competent officers, he believed no troops would be more reliable.

Even the single instance of apparent insubordination which occurred recently at Fort Jackson, was provoked by such unheard-of outrages on the part of the Lieut.-Col., and the other white officers implicated, that Gen. Dwight, who was sent there by General Banks to investigate the matter, personally declared to me, that the colored soldiers were blameless. The officers were dismissed from the service—a very light punishment, considering the enormity of their offences.

This affair was published in many public journals in the United States and abroad as a case of mutiny. It had really nothing of the *animus* of a mutiny. What the men proposed to do was to take with them their shameless and guilty officers, march to New Orleans and deliver themselves up to Gen. Banks as the Commander-in-Chief.

We need not then despair of the emancipated negro. Notwithstanding the degradation imposed upon him by the slave system, there is much left in him to build upon. He is at least ready and willing to undertake the performance of his humble and toilsome part in the new order of things. Indeed, if one may take as a proof, the results of the life-struggle and history of the old free colored people of Louisiana, before referred to, the conclusion is unavoidable, that the black man is not only capable of self-guidance and self-maintenance, but, that under the influence of higher and nobler human motives and incentives, his progress in the arts and attainments of civilized life, is subject only to the same laws that control that of other races of men.

On the other hand, what is to be said of the white man, his old master, and of his capacity, disposition, and attitude relative to the part which he is called upon to perform in the new industrial and social system?

Col. Hanks, a large portion of whose daily life, for two years past, has been spent in daily intercourse with the planters in the Department of the Gulf, declares that "although they begin to see that Slavery is dead, yet the spirit of Slavery still lives among them. Many of them are even more rampant to enslave the negro than ever before. They make great endeavors to recover *what they call their own negroes.* One planter offered me $5,000 to return his negroes. They have even hired men to steal them from my own camp. (The old spirit still prompting to the old crime, which, long ago, was declared felony by the law of nations if perpetrated in Africa.)" "They yield," he continues, "to the idea of freedom only under compulsion. They submit to the terms dictated by the Government, because obliged so to do. Mr. V. B. Marmillon, one of the richest and most extensive sugar planters in the whole valley of the Mississippi, took the oath of allegiance, but refused to work his plantation unless he could have *his own negroes* returned to him. He had 1,450 acres of cane under cultivation; his whole family of plantation hands left him and came to New Orleans, reporting themselves to me. Among them could be found every species of mechanic and artisan. I called them up and informed them that the Government had taken possession of old master's crop, and that they were needed to take it off, and would be paid for their labor. All consented to return; but next morning when the time came for their departure, not one would go. One of them said: "I will go anywhere else to work, but you may shoot me before I will return to the old plantation." I afterwards ascertained that Marmillon, whom they called 'Old Cotton Beard,' had boasted in the presence of two colored girls, house servants, how he would serve them when he once more had them in his power. These girls had walked more than thirty miles in the night to bring the information to their friends." These people were set to work elsewhere.

"It is undoubtedly true," says Col. Hanks, "that this year a change for the better seems to be taking place. In some parishes

the letting of plantations to Northern men has a powerful effect. The disposition of the planters, however, towards their old slaves, when they consent to hire them, is by no means friendly. I told a planter recently, that it was the express order of Gen. Banks that the negroes should be educated. He replied that, 'no one should teach *his negroes.*' "

Col. Hanks further declares it as his deliberate judgment that "if civil government be established here, and military rule withdrawn, there is the greatest danger that the negro would become subject to some form of serfdom."

His testimony on this point is referred to elsewhere.

The statement of Col. Hanks, and the general correctness of his views, were concurred in by many other intelligent persons, familiar with the subject, and my own personal observation fully confirms them. In a stretch of three hundred miles up and down the Mississippi, but one creole planter was found (there may, of course, have been others with whom I did not come in contact,) who heartily and unreservedly adopted the idea of free labor, and honestly carried it out upon his plantation. And although he declared that, in itself it was successful much beyond his expectation, "yet," he said, "my life and that of my family are rendered very unhappy by the opposition and contumely of my neighbors."

The simple truth is, that the virus of slavery, the lust of ownership, in the hearts of these old masters, is as virulent and active to-day as it ever was. Many of them admit that the old form of slavery is for the present, broken up. They do not hesitate even to express the opinion that the experiment of secession is a failure; but they scoff at the idea of freedom for the negro, and repeat the old argument of his incapacity to take care of himself, or to entertain any higher motive for exertion than that of the whip. They await with impatience the withdrawal of the military authorities, and the re-establishment of the civil power of the State to be controlled and used as hitherto for the maintenance of what, to them doubtless, appears the paramount object of all civil authority, of the State itself, some form of the slave system.

With slight modifications, the language recently used by Judge Humphrey in a speech delivered at a Union meeting at

Huntsville, Alabama, seems most aptly to express the hopes and purposes of a large proportion of the old masters in the Valley of the Mississippi, who have consented to qualify their loyalty to the Union by taking the oath prescribed by the President's Proclamation of Amnesty. After advising that Alabama *should at once return to the Union by simply rescinding the ordinance of secession*, and after expressing the opinion that the old institution of slavery was gone, Judge Humphrey says: "I believe, in case of a return to the Union, we would receive *political co-operation*, so as to secure the management of that labor by those who were slaves. *There is really no difference, in my opinion, whether we hold them as absolute slaves, or obtain their labor by some other method.* Of course we prefer the old method. But that question is not now before us."

It is true that Gen. Banks entertains slightly different views of the disposition and purposes of the planters, predicated, however, on the belief that the Government will adopt some system of "sufficient supervision to compel the negro to labor," although, as we have seen he elsewhere declares that good treatment and fair wages have in all cases been found compulsion enough. What the old masters understand by "a supervision to *compel* the negroes to labor," is not difficult to imagine; certainly it is not good treatment and fair wages.

In the letter before referred to, Gen. Banks says: "I have no doubt that many of the planters within our lines, who are protected by the Government in the enjoyment of their property, honestly accept the new situation, and enter into the idea of free labor with sincerity; but it is coupled with an incredulity as to the success of the experiment, natural to their situation, and to the ideas in which they have been educated. This is fostered more by the intractability and brutality of the overseers—the middle class between the laborer and the employer—than it is by any innate disposition of the planter himself, and *their disbelief of any sufficient governmental supervision to compel the negro to labor*, to which they think he is disinclined. If such governmental supervision fail in this regard, the experiment itself will fail."

For a more full expression of the opinions of Gen. Banks on

this subject, reference may be had to a copy of his letter herewith submitted.

The opinions hereinbefore expressed as to the spirit and disposition of the old masters, is fully and explicitly sustained by the testimony of Brig.-Gen. James S. Wadsworth, than whom no man has had better opportunities for an intelligent judgment.

In his examination before the Commission, soon after his return from an official tour through the Valley of the Mississippi, in the early part of the past winter, in speaking of the state of things in Louisiana, Gen. Wadsworth said:

"There is one thing that must be taken into account, and that is, that there will exist a very strong disposition among the masters to control these people, and keep them as a subordinate and subjected class. Undoubtedly they intend to do that. I think the tendency to establish a system of serfdom is the great danger to be guarded against. I talked with a planter in the La Fourche district near Tibadouville; he said he was not in favor of secession; he avowed his hope and expectation that slavery would be restored there in some form. I said: 'If we went away and left these people now, do you suppose you could reduce them again to slavery?' He laughed to scorn the idea that they could not. 'What,' said I, 'these men, who have had arms in their hands?' 'Yes,' he said, 'we should take the arms away from them, of course.'"

Much other testimony of like import might be adduced, but it is believed not necessary to a clear understanding of the present attitude and position of the two principal constituent elements of the disrupted slave society, in the region under consideration.

For the sake of greater perspicuity, I have hitherto refrained from any reference to the treatment and actual condition of the emancipated population, or to the labor system recently introduced in the Department of the Gulf. In what I deem it my duty to say of the former, I refer for the most part to a period antecedent to the date of the proclamation of Gen. Banks prescribing the latter; that proclamation having been issued but a few days previous to my arrival at New Orleans.

Col. Hanks speaks of the patience of these people. Certainly, their uncomplaining endurance under the severest privation and

suffering, is one of the most remarkable characteristics of their race everywhere. Their previous life of slavery inured them to daily, habitual suffering, and up to this hour, their initiation into Freedom has been attended with little else than danger, ill usage, deprivation, sickness, and bereavement. The mortality among them in the Valley of the Mississippi has been frightful. The most competent judges compute it at not less than 25 per cent. in the last two years. With few exceptions, they have everywhere come under the control of incompetent and otherwise unfit officials. Often here, as elsewhere, they have fallen a prey to the avaricious and unscrupulous. In many instances, clothed in rags, without wholesome or sufficient food, lodged at night without beds or bedding, they have toiled for months, and in the end have been turned off with little or no compensation. The great exposures to which they have been subjected, gave rise to severe and fatal diseases amongst them, in which they were left, in many cases, without proper care or medical attendance. Great mortality was a natural consequence. Much deprivation and suffering were, under the most favorable circumstances, inevitable to the exigencies in which they were placed by the war. But I should fail in my duty if I neglected to declare, that in my judgment, many of the injuries of which they have been the victims, and a great deal of their suffering, have resulted from the failure of the national authorities to provide a proper and uniform system for their care and protection.

In departments where, as here in the Department of the Gulf, there is good reason to believe that the chief military authorities have had at heart their best interests, occupied as they have been with the movements of great armies and by the absorbing cares of the military government devolved upon them, it was inevitable that they should often fall into the hands of incompetent and unfaithful subalterns; even under the system recently put into operation here, and which in many respects is certainly better than the lack of system previously existing, they come directly under the control and government of the assistant provost marshals,* to each of whom is assigned a certain district of the

* "All questions," says the order of Gen. Banks, "between the employer and the employed, until other tribunals are established, will be decided by the provost marshals of the parishes."

planting region. These assistant provost marshals are usually young subalterns, army officers, captains or lieutenants. They are received into the houses of the planters and treated with a certain consideration. It is hardly to be expected that they should resist the influences that are brought to bear upon them, or that often, without being fully conscious of it, they should not become the employer's instrument of great injustice and ill treatment towards his colored laborers.

An upright and competent witness whose testimony is herewith submitted, says: "I am free to declare that the provost marshals have not done justice to the laborers on the plantations. They do not see that Gen. Banks' orders are carried out. On many plantations whipping is still permitted." More than one instance of great neglect, injustice and abuse have come to the knowledge of the Commission.

The plan of Gen. Banks has been in operation too short a time to judge fully of its merits. But, as I have just said, it is believed on the whole and as a *temporary* arrangement, superior to any hitherto adopted in that department. As a permanent system it contains great defects. In the first place it leaves the classification of the laborers to be determined between the employers and the assistant provost marshals, which is practically leaving it to the employers themselves. Then, secondly, without reference to the capacities or wishes of the employed, or to the competition of the labor market, it determines beforehand the wages of their labor.

In the third place, it implies that the clothing and subsistence of the laborer and his family, should be left to the employers' sense of what is needful for them, with liberty to be sure, for the employed to commute for clothing at the rate of three dollars a month for first class hands, and in similar proportion for other classes.

If the only object to be accomplished was simply "to compel the negro to labor" in a condition of perpetual subordination and subjection, this arrangement would be appropriate enough. But if the object be to make the colored man a self-supporting and self-defending member of the community, then he must be placed in a position where he can determine the value of his

own labor, and be left to take the responsibilities of his own existence and well being, as well as that of his family.

As a general proposition this is too plain, and in itself too cogent to require argument. In the actual condition of things in the Department of the Gulf, it might not be convenient or even possible to give it full effect at the present moment; but the temporary adoption of an opposite principle, should not be allowed to become the basis of a permanent system, which would differ very little in its practical working from that of slavery itself.

In regard to classification, clothing, and the rate of wages, the plan of Mr. Wm. P. Mellen, Agent of the Treasury Department at Natchez, appears to me a much nearer approach to right principles and justice, as between employer and employed. In this plan the classification is determined beforehand, and the employed are allowed to clothe themselves. The rate of wages is here also fixed by authority, which, as before suggested, is only to be justified by the necessity of protecting the laborer under the peculiar circumstances in which he is placed by the war; but here the rate is much nearer to the standard of the public market.

According to Mr. Mellen's plan, all sound persons between the ages of 20 and 40 are No. 1 hands. Between 15 and 19 and between 40 and 50 years, No. 2 hands. Between 12 and 14 and over 50, No. 3 hands.

The wages for males, No. 1 hands, are $25 per month; No. 2, $20, and No. 3, $15. For females the wages are for the several grades respectively, $18, $14, and $10.

Persons suffering from any physical defect or infirmity constitute a fourth class, and are paid accordingly. In Mr. Mellen's system the employers are obliged to keep on hand a sufficient supply of proper clothing, and to sell the same to the employed at wholesale cost price and ten per cent. advance.

The rate of wages of the several grades of laborers, as fixed in the Department of the Gulf, is eight, six, five, and three dollars a month, with clothing, or three dollars per month commutation for clothing. In this Department also, the laborer having once selected his employer is compelled to remain with him for a year. While under any system that may be adopted it is doubtless

of the greatest importance that the colored laborer should be made to understand the nature and obligations of a contract, and should be held to the just fulfillment of such as he may voluntarily enter into, this form of enforcing the obligation is deemed wrong in principle and liable to serious abuses, and only to be tolerated as a temporary necessity.

The system of Gen. Banks provides also for the education of the colored children on the plantations, and for the establishment of free labor savings institutions, both of which meet the entire approval of the Commission.

I do not deem it necessary here to enter further into the details of these several systems. The proclamation and the orders under which they are established, are undoubtedly of record in the War and Treasury departments. Nor do I desire to criticise too closely plans adopted, doubtless with the best intentions, to meet the urgent necessities which presented themselves in the confusion and chaos consequent upon the breaking up of the old systems, in the midst of a great war. Neither, however, seems to me sufficiently to recognize the freedman's right to intervene in his own affairs, or to contemplate sufficiently the great end of educating him to self control, self reliance, and to the exercise of the rights and duties of civilized life.

This must, of course, be a work of time. But unless a system be speedily adopted which shall embrace these as its fundamental and primary objects, the practical freedom and future well-being of the emancipated population, no less than the great industrial interests dependent upon their voluntary, enlightened, and justly compensated labor, will be seriously, if not fatally jeopardied.

But, in the judgment of the Commission, the most serious error in connection with the present arrangements for the care and protection of these people arises out of the assignment to a different agency of the care and disposal of the abandoned plantations. To enter into the detail of all the evils and abuses that have arisen out of this error, and which are unavoidable, so long as it continues to exist, would occupy too great a space in this report. Suffice it to say that it is the source of the greatest confusion and a perpetual collision between the different local authorities, in which not only the emancipated population but

the Government itself, suffers the most serious injuries and losses.

Gen. Banks, in the letter hereinbefore so often quoted, says: "The assignment of the abandoned or forfeited plantations to one department of the Government, aud the protection and support of the emancipated people to another, is a fundamental error productive of incalculable evils, and cannot be too soon or too thoroughly corrected."

And this is the purport of all the testimony which the Commission has been able to obtain, not in the Department of the Gulf only, but everywhere, in relation to this matter.

The unhesitating judgment of every person, official or other, not interested in the opportunities it affords for peculation, with whom we have consulted, coincides with that of Gen. Banks. All, without exception, declare that no system can avail to effect the great objects contemplated, that does not assign to one and the same authority, the care and disposal of the abandoned plantations, and the care and protection of the emancipated laborers who are to cultivate them.

And, after the most thorough investigations, I am authorized in saying that this is the deliberate judgment of the Commission.

If, in the preceding cursory survey of the present state of things in the valley of the Mississippi, I have succeeded in presenting the two constituent elements of the old slave society in their true light, it cannot fail to suggest the intrinsic nature of the antagonisms that stand in the way of the successful introduction of the free labor system there, and of the political reconstruction based upon it. Fvery analysis of slave society everywhere brings us to a like conclusion. The difficulty is not with the emancipated slave; but with the old master, still enthralled by his old infatuation.

I am aware that this master class has been hitherto generally represented as a body of men remarkable for their proficiency in statesmanship, politics, and deportment. It is hardly necessary now to controvert this view of them, any further than to say, that there is another quite as intrinsic and much more important to be well understood.

Aunt Phillis, the old slave cook of the highly respectable and

thrifty St. Helena cotton planter, Mr. John Pope, in the midst of the story of her long experience of the cruelties and sufferings of plantation life, upon the very ground where she then stood free at last, stopped, as if some new light had burst upon her weary and bewildered soul, and looking up said: "Trute is, Massa, Massa Pope tought God was dead." That was her account of them, her explanation of the phenomena she had been witness to in the secret recesses of that social order of which they were the founders and chiefs. And by no means a very irrational one, for certainly, to men who had come to ignore so utterly, the existence of God's image under the black skin, so often lacerated by the blows of their many thonged whip of dried bull's hide, such a thought was not at all unlikely.

However this may be, what is certain is that these masters, isolating themselves, in their fierce pride, from the great movements of the free, democratic society and civilization of their country and age, had come to entertain some very strange and erroneous beliefs, as well with regard to themselves as with regard to the world around them. With their hearts filled with the indisputable ownership of broad domains and toiling slaves, is it strange that the fumes of unrestrained and illicit power and dominion, should have mounted into their heads and perverted, not their own self-consciousness only, but their whole sense of truth and of the quality of actions and of things, even to the extent of believing their monstrous system of organized barbarism, the supremest and most excellent product of the ages, and its maintenance the one paramount concern of the world? What to them was the value of constitution, government, or country, compared with the interests of their God-ordained slave commonwealth and mastership?

Seldom has the ethical providence of the world had to deal with so profound a blindness and degeneration. It is only to be paralleled by that of an order of men whose *regime* was extinguished in its own blood at the end of the last century in France. Apparently that ancient "noblesse" was as besotted with pride and disdain as even this new order of the slave-whip. They seem to have entertained as supreme a contempt for the poor, white-skinned drudges, upon whose spoilated labor they had lived and prospered and revelled for a thousand years, as any

master for his black-skinned chattels. It is related that one of them, a certain Count de Charolais, whom Dulaure calls the finest specimen of a feudal lord of his time, used sometimes to amuse his leisure by shooting at the tilers on the roofs of the neighboring houses; and when one of them rolled down, wounded or dead, it was an occasion of great merriment to him and his companions. Doubtless, that to him was as enjoyable a feat, as the blows of the coach-trace whip upon the bare back of a prostrate, pregnant woman to that South Carolina master, Fararby, whose exploit is mentioned in the main Report of the Commission.

And yet it would seem that even these people had not got to quite the depth of Aunt Phillis's master. They did not "believe that God was dead." The faith they had come to entertain and profess was only that, so confidently announced by a lady of the Court of Louis 15th. Speaking of some de Charolais who had just been called to his final account, she said, "Depend upon it, sir, God will think twice before damning a man of that quality." It took the Reign of Terror and the Guillotine to cure that ancient *noblesse* of their delusions.

The culmination of the masters' infatuation in their present atrocious war would seem to indicate a somewhat similar kind of Providential surgery, to have been necessary for them.

However this may be, had not their infatuation and blindness infected and demoralized the mind and heart of the whole people of the United States and of their public servants, the intrinsic nature of their mastership, and the utter incompatibility of its existence, with that of our free democratic institutions and civilization, would long ago have been recognized and acted upon frankly, and without equivocations or reservations.

Every diagnosis of the malady under which the body politic is writhing and staggering in the present hour, discloses its nucleus in the old mastership. That in this mastership is the seat of the disease, containing the pestiferous virus by which the whole nation has been infected. That this seed of national dishonor, dissolution, and death, was brought from Africa, and landed upon the banks of the James River, Virginia, in the autumn of that same year (1620) in which the Pilgrims, with the germs of our national life, civilization, and glory, landed

upon Plymouth Rock. That this fatal virus has spread and increased in virulence for more than two hundred years, until the glow of the fever had come to be mistaken for the bloom of health; until the summits of the mountainous social carbuncle generated by it, had come to be regarded as the heights of national culture, wealth, and glory. Let us thank God that it has burst at last, and opened up to the eyes of all men its loathsome depths, so that the merest tyro in the science of social and political health and statesmanship, need no longer be mistaken as to its nature, or as to the treatment proper for its cure.

Let us indeed thank God, that under the operation of his own infinitely just and inexorable laws, the white man's great enterprise of nearly four hundred years' duration, to rob the negro race of its labor and enrich himself with it, approaches its final termination.

A more stupendous scheme of human selfishness and wrong was never projected or prosecuted on earth. Taking it from its beginnings, in the slave-hunts in Africa, in which it is said two human beings, on an average, were destroyed for every one taken—through the nameless atrocities of the middle passage, in the course of which it is estimated that more than two millions of human bodies, dead and alive, were cast into the sea, to its final consummation on this continent, in a gigantic system of organized inhumanity and barbarism, it involved the commission of every crime known to civilized nations.

It could not be otherwise; the very nature of the enterprise made the commission of all crimes a necessary incident, to its successful prosecution. Viewed then, simply, in the light of its own legitimate operations, the slave system may well be defined "the sum of all villainies." Viewed in the light of its own essential idea, of its own intrinsic nature, it involves a still profounder guilt; for it not only contemplated the overthrow in morals and legislation, of the distinction fundamental to all human civilization, between person and property, but the extinction in a whole race of men, of that divine spark which constitutes the manhood, and gives to that distinction its validity. Thus, in import and intention it outreached all secular crime, to sap the innermost foundations of the immortal life.

Only in the terrible glare cast upon it by the present war did the true nature of the mastership, and the order of slavery founded upon it, begin to reveal itself to the popular understanding. We may well believe that when the great revolution now transpiring shall have swept out of existence all its interests and passions, all the blindness and infatuation engendered by it, it will be difficult for the future historian to realize or recall that state of the public conscience in which its enormities were not only deemed innocent, but here in the United States, were accepted as an essential, component part of a great System of Democratic Liberty and Christian civilization.

We still stand in the midst of that revolution. Its great work, the regeneration of the reason and conscience of the nation and of its public servants, has yet by no means been fully accomplished. By a great law of the ethical Providence, the struggle must continue until both are cleansed of the moral and political pollutions and lies, that slavery has engendered there, and the people and their rulers, accept with all their hearts and in their true and broadest meaning "the self evident truths" of the great declaration: "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." For, let us rest assured, that in these truths are contained the germs, the vital forces of whatever national prosperity, civilization, and history is possible to us as a people.

In all manner of official proclamations and manifestoes, it has been repeatedly declared that the war on our part was waged alone for the preservation of the constitution and the reestablishment of the Union. But what would be the value of the letter of the constitution unless quickened by the spirit of these "self-evident truths." And what would the Union be, without the inherent principle of cohesion, the living unity founded in these truths?

Reunion then, and the preservation of the essential life of the constitution, demand, not only the release of the slave population from their bonds and the degradation thereby imposed upon them; but the deliverance of the master population also, wholly and forever, from their mastership, and from the fatal delusions and depravations that are inherent in it. This is the primary

necessity of any rational attempt to establish free labor and a better social order in the Slave States, the very first step towards any wise, or well-founded reconstruction; for in no other way can the rebel States ever be rehabilitated with a truly loyal, democratic, concurrent citizenship.

And this brings me to speak of the means which, in the judgment of the Commission are deemed necessary to give practical effect to the acts of Congress and the President's Proclamation of January, 1863, "to the end that the colored population thereby emancipated may defend and support themselves." Their recommendations embrace three principal measures, which with more or less completeness have been heretofore, in their several preliminary reports and are herewith, in their final report, submitted to the War Department.

The object of the first of these measures is to secure beyond any possible peradventure or doubt, the civil right of the colored man to personal freedom, by placing that right, in the new order of thing, on the same broad basis as that of the white man.

In the Declaration of Independence, and in the Bills of Right, contained in nearly all of the Constitutions of the States, even in those of the Slave States, this right of Personal Liberty, with others, considered as personal endowments of the Creator, attributes of the human nature—are expressly reserved as above all governmental interference, as too sacred to be meddled with by human legislatures. And this doctrine is the keystone of our whole system of Free Democratic Institutions. These rights are as sacred in the person of the colored man as of the white man; and upon every consideration of justice to him, as of safety to the commonweal and honor of the nation, ought to be as securely guarantied, as sacredly guarded.

This is to be effected most surely by an amendment of the Constitution of the United States. That measure is already before Congress, and although not exactly in the form recommended by the Commission, yet it is believed sufficient, especially if accompanied with other legislation in the same spirit and with a like intent, to accomplish the great object proposed, and every true lover of his country's permanent peace, prosperity, and honor, cannot but await with the greatest anxiety its final consummation.

The second is a measure of scarcely less importance, and considering the exigencies of the approaching crisis and the present temper and disposition of the master class, even more immediately urgent than the first.

Whenever civil authority shall be re-established in the rebel States, and they shall be re-admitted to the Federal Union, the greater portion of the civil and political rights of their inhabitants, necessarily fall under the jurisdiction and control of State authority. In all these States the colored people, even such of them as have been always free, have been uniformly debarred the enjoyment of all political and many civil rights. Unless, therefore, the emancipated population have secured to them their civil and political rights by national authority, antecedent to such re-admission, they will stand in imminent danger of being defrauded of any practical freedom, notwithstanding "the acts of Congress and the President's Proclamation."

In the language of a witness whose intimate acquaintance with the spirit of the master-class, gives great weight to his words: "They had much better be slaves with the present feelings of the Southern whites against them, than to be left without national guarantees for the maintenance of their rights as freemen."

It is the producing class—that class whose whole life is devoted to toil—that under every form of civil government is most in danger of being made the victim of the leisure, capital, and opportunities of the non-producing class. Under the most favorable circumstances, therefore, it is this class that most needs and deserves to be fenced about with civil and political guarantees. But the circumstances and position of the emancipated population are most unfavorable and critical. Without their own volition, without previous preparation, and as a measure of national self-preservation, they have been suddenly precipitated into new and wholly untried relations with an antagonistic, far more able and adroit class. To leave them in this position, defenceless and at the mercy of their old masters, would in its cruelest meaning be to keep with them "the word of promise to the ear and break it to the hope."

Nay, not only the national honor, but future national peace and well being demand that the National Government should secure to these people now, while they are still under the sole

jurisdiction and control of that government, the permanent possession of such civil and political rights as will enable them "to defend and support themselves," against the machinations and schemes of any class or power to subject them again to any form of slavery or serfdom.

To this end, I cannot too earnestly urge that Congress be invoked to fix and establish by law antecedent to, and as a condition precedent to reconstruction, the civil rights of the emancipated population; and, at the same time, to provide for the future enjoyment by all free persons of color of the fundamental right of citizenship in a free government, the right to the elective franchise, based upon the acquisition on their part, of such qualifications only, as are deemed essential in their white fellow-citizens.

Another matter intimately connected with the foregoing, and as I believe, profoundly involving the existence and future prosperity of free society in the Southern States, is the disposition to be made of the confiscated estates, or other forfeited lands in these States. No such thing as free, democratic society can exist in any country where all the lands are owned by one class of men and are cultivated by another. Such ownership of the lands of a country constitutes the basis of the most permanent and oppressive aristocracies. Upon this foundation stood, for a thousand years, the feudal aristocracy of France. And, to-day, the aristocracy of England maintain their supremacy upon the basis of the partition and tenure of the soil of England, robbed by William the Conqueror from the original owners, the people of England, and granted in large estates to his captains.

So incompatible has that tenure become with modern civilization and the well-being of society in that country, that the wisest statesmen there are beginning to apprehend the most fearful consequences from its continued existence.

In the sugar and cotton producing portions of the South, almost all the cultivated soil has been hitherto held in large tracts by the master-class.

I need not stop to argue the utter incompatibility of such a state of things with the existence of a free, independent, democratic yeomanry, or with the development of free democratic institutions. The poor whites of the South are a sufficient illus-

tration of its pernicious influence and effect upon a whole community, of the same race with the landholders.

If not for the sake of the emancipated colored people, then for the sake of these poor whites, these most pitiable men of our own race, this whole scheme and tenure of the mastership should be overthrown. The great necessity, as I have before intimated from another point of view, which at the present hour lies upon the people and Government of the United States, is not so much a political as a social reconstruction of the Southern States. Any well founded plan for the former, to be effectual and permanent, must include the latter; and for the latter, the initiation of a policy on the part of the National Government, which shall have for its aim the ultimate division of the great plantations, into moderate sized farms, to be held and cultivated by the labor of their owners, is of the utmost importance.

I am aware that an opinion has been hitherto generally entertained that sugar and cotton cultivation, could only be profitably carried on upon large estates, and by the employment of large gangs of laborers, principally because a large capital is necessary to the erection of the sugar mills, cotton gins, and other machinery connected with the production of these commodities. All the investigations of the Commission go to show, that this opinion is but a part of the system of slavery, and has no foundation in the necessities of the case. There is, in reality, no more reason why the sugar cane should be raised and converted into sugar by the planter alone, than there is that wheat should be converted into flour, only by the farmer who raises it. And so with the raising, ginning, and baling of cotton. On the contrary, a proper division of labor in the raising and manufacture of sugar and cotton, would almost inevitably lead to a great development in their production; while, at the same time, it would tend not only to mitigate the labor, but to secure the industrial prosperity and independence of all those employed in that production, and thus constitute an entirely different order of social relation and condition in these States. I consider this a matter next in importance to the permanent security of the civil and political rights of the emancipated population, and beg leave to recommend it to the earnest attention of the national authorities.

And, finally, permit me once more to call the attention of Government to the third of the measures proposed by the Commission—the establishment of some uniform system of supervision and guardianship for the emancipated population in the interim of their transition from slavery to freedom. No one acquainted with the facts could hesitate a moment as to the necessity and propriety of such a system; not only for the sake of the emancipated, but for the general interest of the Government and country.

In the letter so frequently hereinbefore mentioned, General Banks most forcibly says: "It is undoubtedly true, as you say, that for some time to come, and until the new order of things shall be better understood by the employer and the employed, and the free-labor system be more completely established, there will be a necessity for some kind of Government supervision and protcctorate for the benefit of both parties."

"But this is not specially incident to the new system of negro labor. It is only by Governmental supervision and assistance that the labor of any race has been fostered and established. It is of course as necessary for the blacks as for the whites, and if you look at the stipulations which the blacks in this department have themselves suggested, as the condition of their service, you will find that their ideas embody in substance and in character, the spirit of all statute legislation for the protection of white labor."

"It is no more incident to the condition of the blacks than of any other class of people, except that they enter the arena of civilization at a later period and the difficulties of their position are presented at a glance and a remedy instantly demanded."

All of which is respectfully submitted.

J. McKAYE,

Special Commissioner.

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